

THE BATTLE FOR CHRISTIAN MUSIC

February 22, 1997 (Fundamental Baptist Information Service, P.O. Box 610368, Port Huron, MI 48061, 866-295-4143, fbns@wayoflife.org) -

A helpful book dealing with Christian music today is **THE BATTLE FOR CHRISTIAN MUSIC** by Tim Fisher (copyright 1992, Sacred Music Services, P.O. Box 17072, Greenville, SC 29606). Though we do not agree with every jot and tittle, we are convinced this book is extremely important for this present hour. This book is \$11 plus \$1.25 S/H. The Fishers are dedicated to providing quality sacred recordings and other music-related materials for church and home. They publish a newsletter entitled **CHURCH MUSIC DYNAMICS** which deals with musical themes. Subscription is \$10 per year. Through an associated ministry called **DISCOVER CHRISTIAN MUSIC**, the Fishers distribute a wide range of sound Christian music--519 Piedmont Golf Course Road, Piedmont, SC 29673, tel. 1-800-767-4326.

In the Preface to **THE BATTLE FOR CHRISTIAN MUSIC**, Brother Fisher notes: "This is not a question of 'us versus them.' It is a watershed issue that is determining the destiny of every church in our culture. Those who choose wrongly will undermine the foundation of their ministry. Musical choices are directional choices. A wrong philosophy of music either reveals or insures a wrong philosophy of ministry." We could not agree more.

FOLLOWING ARE A FEW EXCERPTS FROM **THE BATTLE FOR CHRISTIAN MUSIC** --

"Years ago I heard a tape of a man who was defending the neutrality of music in a public service. He walked over to the piano and played a C major chord. Then, he asked the audience if it was a good C major chord or an evil C major chord. After some scattered laughter, he said, 'See, there's no such thing as good or evil music.' He made a rather obvious mistake, however, in his reasoning: a C major chord isn't music! It is a building block of music--and there's a big difference. . . . Why are we willing to admit these facts when it comes to literature, art, sculpture, or any other form of creativity--but not music? . . . When you enter a freshman theory class as a music major in any discipline of music, among the first things you would study are the 'ingredients' (neutral elements) of music: melody, rhythm, and harmony. . . . Eventually you would learn to combine these elements into a musical language that communicates what you desire. . . . Music always affects us, because music is not neutral." (pp. 60-63)

"Rock music elevates rhythm as the most stressed element, then harmony-melody is last. . . . Rap is the logical extension of the direction in which rock music has been headed. Once you demote certain musical elements into relative unimportance, they will soon disappear altogether. Most of rock music did away with melodic interest a long time ago. Therefore, if melody is unimportant, why have it? This is exactly what rap 'music' has done. It has emphasized rhythm as the only important musical element, while de-emphasizing melody and harmony to the point where they are virtually non-existent. By every good definition of music, rap is not music! It is merely rhythmic entertainment." (pp. 77,78)

"Where do these rhythms come from, and how did they get into our music? Though the answer may astound you, the documentation once again is clear. Little Richard (known for his profligate way of life) made it plain: "My true belief about Rock 'n' Roll--and there have been a lot of phrases attributed to me over the years--is this: I believe this kind of music is demonic A lot of the beats in music today are taken from voodoo, from the voodoo drums. If you study music in rhythms, like I have, you'll see that is true..." (Little Richard, quoted by Charles White, *The Life and Times of Little Richard*, New York: Pocket Books, 1984, p. 197).

"Jeff Godwin (*Dancing with Demons*, Chick Publications) gives some startling evidence on the number of influential rock musicians who studied the ancient beats of satanic worship. These rockers include Brian Jones (Rolling Stones), John Phillips (The Mamas and the Papas), Paul McCartney (The Beatles), Mick Fleetwood (Fleetwood Mac), and Jimmy Page and Robert Plant (Led Zeppelin). These men studied with satanic masters in their attempt to find rhythmic freedom. The satanic connection for a large number of rock musicians is undeniable. Why put our heads in the sand? We do not charge that Christian rock musicians are consciously serving Satan; but by modeling their music after these unholy rock bands, they are opening to Satan an avenue he has never enjoyed before in our churches. . . . Don't let the CCM crowd draw attention away from the important issues. The twisted rock beat is rebellious in its nature, origin, and use. It represents the music of rebellion, and we who claim to be Christlike have no business being involved with it in any way whatsoever because it violates the very nature of God." (pp. 81,82)

"One of the most popular Christian children's tape series (Psalty, put out by Maranatha Music) made the following statements in one of its tapes. Very early in the program, the smallest child says, 'Psalty, I'm so little. How can I praise the Lord?' Psalty's response is 'Can you jump up and down? Can you get down on the ground? Can you shout with all your might, "Praise the Lord!"? If you can do that with all your heart, then you can praise the Lord.' The next song (with a decidedly contemporary sound) then begins with all the children singing, 'I'm gonna jump down/ turn around/ touch the ground/ and praise my Lord.' This false message is typical of the feeling-oriented Christian life that these children's tapes teach: 'As long as you are sincere, God will accept anything you do.'" (pp. 100,101)

"Can you imagine Mozart being played in a bar? Not very likely--because the music of Mozart isn't compatible with such an atmosphere. Can you imagine singing the Doxology to the tune of 'Stars and Stripes Forever'? Would you receive a blessing by singing the words of 'The Old Rugged Cross' to the Beatles' tune 'I Wanna Hold Your Hand'?" These are ridiculous illustrations because the music is obviously incompatible with the message." (p. 102)

"The tragic truth is that most Christians judge the effectiveness of music based upon the yardstick of the flesh, rather than the yardstick of the Spirit. If a song thrills us, we like it. If it doesn't excite us, we don't like it. Too often our opinion of a song is not based on the musical,

textual, or even biblical worth of it--but rather on how it makes us feel. As in so many other areas of life, we take a sensual approach to music." (p. 104)

"Before salvation, life consists of almost total dedication to pleasing the flesh. This is natural for the unsaved. Every decision, including the style of music listened to, is based solely on how it makes them feel. If after salvation, a person is trying to choose Christian music on this same basis, he is doomed to fail before he even begins (1 Peter 1:14-15). This is why there are so many Christians, going to good churches, who are totally frustrated in their response to the music. They say, 'This just doesn't thrill me like the other stuff did.' And do you know what? They are right! It can't, because the flesh and the Spirit are contrary to one another. The proper response is to learn to approach God's music in the Spirit." (pp. 104,105)

"And yet many Christians experience little spiritual excitement in singing the truths of Scripture. They have fallen in love with the entertainment of the world. . . . Our problem is that we approach music for excitement rather than edification--for worldly selfishness rather than worshipful surrender." (p. 105)

"There is so much pressure on pastors and music directors to provide entertaining music that will attract and excite a crowd. . . . Sadly, more and more pastors are seeing a decline in the spirit of their services, if not in numerical growth. They report an apathy in the congregation. They see an increasing numbness to spiritual things. They tell me of decreasing participation in the song service. . . . Perhaps this is the most common blind spot: failure to see that public worship is only the manifestation of private worship. The reason our public services are dead is that our private devotional life is dead. The 'quick fix' of injecting more upbeat music into our services may seem to solve the problem, but we have ignored the disease that will destroy us unless we seek God's cure." (pp. 106-108)

"There are many CCM performers who do not believe the Bible, yet we allow them to sing in the homes of our people on a daily basis without warning. If you would not allow a charismatic preacher in your pulpit, why let one sing to your people? I am not trying to portray all charismatics as unsaved, but we certainly do not want them as our teachers. To keep doctrine pure, we must separate from those who teach false doctrine and never give them an audience in our churches. . . . If the lifestyle or music style is inappropriate and unscriptural, the claim to the office of minister is invalid. . . . People can state whatever they want, but that doesn't give them the authority to be our ministers; authority comes from obedience to God's Word." (pp. 122,123)

"Our offertories become piano solos, and the biggest 'Amens!' are reserved for the greatest showmanship. Trumpet solos seem to be most effective when the final verse is triple-tongued. Violinists try to sound like Paganinni. Have we fallen into the 'entertainment trap' again? If our purpose is to communicate the message of the song, what can we do to enhance the message rather than the messenger? This question needs to be asked of every church instrumentalist. Are

congregations so used to approaching music on a sensual plane that they can no longer tell the difference between a spiritual blessing and a musical thrill?" (p. 141)

"Since music is an emotional expression, singing with sincerity indicates that our hearts are turned toward God. Those who will not sing in church are showing that they may have nothing to sing about." (p. 153)

"It is discouraging that we have allowed so much wrong thinking in our churches about music. We sing songs to get the ushers down the aisles or to seat late-comers. We forget that we should sing to the Lord for His glory. Those on the platform are seen by the congregation each week; often they are talking or just standing, and the congregation sees that they are not interested in singing the hymns. We carelessly rush through the song service, omitting stanzas with no thought. We hurriedly choose our hymns five minutes before the service, and if we are lucky enough once in a while to choose a hymn that matches the content of the sermon, we act as if it is a miracle of the Lord. We could be doing a much better job of planning for success." (p. 160)

"The pastor needs to be willing to be the leader of the music program. This does not mean the pastor must join the choir or sing solos. It means that he shows the church that he is concerned for the right type of music ministry: he comments on the songs or the special music and applies them to his sermon; he shows by his attentiveness and participation in the song service that this is an important part of the worship time; he occasionally remind his congregation of the importance of participation; he works with his music director to insure a smooth and balanced service. . . . Most important, the pastor teaches his people the biblical principles of music and its use in the church." (p. 161)

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